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Potato-Sugar Beet Harvest, 1941
Snake River Valley, Idaho-Oregon
Report by George D. Renan
Labor Division
Farm Security Administration
Region XI

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Potatoes and sugar beets are the two main-row crops in Idaho. The most important cash crop in the State is potatoes. During the ten years 1931 through 1940, the cash income from potatoes averaged over \$10,000,000 annually. In 1940 potatoes represented over 78% of the carload shipments of fruits and vegetables in Idaho. The cash income from sugar beets in the same period averaged about \$4,000,000 annually. The gross returns to the growers of these two crops averaged over \$14,000,000 annually.

Idaho ranks third of all the States in the yield of potatoes per acre. Since 1937 the State ranks second in the Nation in the total potato production. Idaho produced about 7% of the national production of both potatoes and sugar beets during the 1930-39 period.

In 1940 over 65% of the Idaho potatoes were shipped to the midwest. The sugar beets are processed in seven factories in the Snake River Valley region of Idaho and Oregon.

Nearly all of the Idaho potatoes are of the late varieties. About 90% of the State's potatoes are Russet Burbanks (Netted Gems). In 1941 over half of the potato - sugar beet acreage was in the Upper Snake * River Valley from Pocatello north to Ashton with its center in Idaho Falls. Over a third of the acreage was in the South Central part of the State, from Buhl to Rupert with its center at Twin Falls. Most of the remaining acreage was in southwestern Idaho, Nampa to Wilder. Malheur County on the Oregon side of the Snake River had about 6500 acres of sugar beets and about 5500 acres of potatoes in 1941. Most of the early and intermediate potatoes in the Snake River Valley are grown in Malheur County, Oregon and in southwestern Idaho. This area ranges from Nampa, Idaho to Jamieson, Oregon.

Potatoes and sugar beets are not only important to Idaho from the viewpoint of the gross cash income of these crops. Even more important is the fact that the two crops are grown principally on family-size farms. The average acreage per grower of each crop is under ten acres.

There are 15,000 to 20,000 potato growers in the State. The number of sugar beet growers is somewhat smaller. An indication of the family-size nature of these crops may be seen in the fact that about 75% of the RR clients in Bonneville County, Idaho grow an average of 16 acres of potatoes. Another important factor in the operation of

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these family-size farms is the ease with which potatoes and sugar beets are integrated with a livestock program. In 1940 almost 5 million bushels of potatoes were utilized for feed in Idaho. The 350,000 tons of green beet tops were equivalent in feed value to 70,000 tons of alfalfa. Sugar beet pulp and molasses, factory by-products, are valuable feeds sold to the growers by the sugar factories.

LABOR SOURCES AND RECRUITMENT

Potatoes and sugar beets, with the exception of lettuce in the Nampa-Jamieson district, are the last major crops to be harvested in the Snake River Valley. Nearly all of the agricultural labor is therefore available for the potato-sugar beet harvest.

"LOCALS"

A substantial percentage of the potato-sugar beet crop was harvested by local labor.

In some districts (Ashton, St. Anthony, Aberdeen) practically the whole crop was harvested by "locals". Growers who had small acreages of only one of the crops - potatoes or sugar beets - usually harvested their own crop with family labor. A considerable portion of the "locals" consisted of elementary and high school children. Over one-third of the potato-sugar beet placements from the Burley Employment Service office were school children. One-fourth of these placements in the Jerome Employment Service office were school children. Nearly all of the smaller communities in the South Central and Upper Snake River areas had "spud" holidays, sometimes lasting as long as three weeks (Shelley). The schools that did not close gave working permits to the children who wished to work in the harvest. "Spud" holidays and working permits have been a customary practice in the upper Snake and south central areas. An important section of the "locals" came from small hamlets and farms of the back country. Workers in warehouses, potato cellars and sugar factories consisted almost exclusively of "locals". In some districts, particularly in the Nampa-Jamieson area, farmers who had completed their own harvest work went into the potato-sugar beet harvest. Nearly all of the WPA workers went into the harvest. A number of Indians, mostly young men and older boys from the Fort Hall Reservation, worked in the Blackfoot district.

MIGRANTS

Most of the migrant labor in the Upper Snake River area came from Montana, Wyoming and Utah. The migrants from the Great Plains States congregated in the South Central and Nampa-Jamieson areas. The Missouri migrants tended to congregate in the Nampa-Jamieson area (20% of the families in the Wilder mobile camp came from Missouri). Many of the migrants, particularly from Kansas and the Northern Great Plains States, were single men who usually travelled in groups and worked as crews. These crews of single men go to the Snake

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River Valley after completion of work in the grain harvest in the East. Most of these single men go back to their respective States at the completion of the potato-sugar beet harvest in the Snake River region. A significant number of these single men and also a number of the family groups from the east will go on to the defense centers on the west coast. They hope to utilize their potato-sugar beet stake to tide them over their job-seeking period in the defense areas.

There were about 500 Mexicans in the Upper Snake area. The south central area had relatively few Mexicans. The Mexicans made up a substantial percentage of the beet labor for the Nampa-Jamieson area. There were about 200 Negroes in the Upper Snake area. The South Central and Nampa-Jamieson area had a very small number of Negroes. Nearly all of the Mexicans and Negroes came from California.

A very small number of the harvest workers came from the CCC camps.

A large percentage of the labor, both local and migrant, consisted of unattached men. Practically all Negroes were single young men under 25 years of age. Only a small percent of the Mexicans were in family groups.

In past years there have been many more Mexicans working in the Upper Snake area. This year many of these Mexicans went to the sugar beet areas in Montana and Nebraska. The Mexicans attributed the decline of their numbers in the Upper Snake area to poor housing conditions.

STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

The State Employment Service had offices in nearly all of the harvest centers. They had representatives stationed in all the FSA camps. The offices were open at 6:00 A.M. each day immediately before and during the peak of the harvest.

Approximately 7500 placements were made in the Potato-sugar beet harvest by the Employment Service in the Snake River Valley of Idaho and Oregon. About 1/3 of these placements were made by the Employment Service offices in the FSA camps. As a rule these placements were of workers from the FSA camp population. The only exception to this situation existed in the Nyssa, Oregon camp where about 1/4 of the placements of the State Employment Service were "locals" living outside of the camp. In those districts where there was an Employment Service office in both the town and the camp the town office was usually given preference in placing "locals" and only when no "locals" were obtainable were placements made from the camp population, (Twin Falls). The Amalgamated Sugar Company officials and their field men in the south central and Nampa-Jamieson area worked in close cooperation with the Employment Service. The Utah-Idaho Sugar Company in the Upper Snake

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area did not cooperate any too well with the local Employment Service officials.

In some districts the pool halls are the main points of recruitment and have been so in years past. Many of the pool halls have blackboards with job requests posted. A few of the pool halls have loud speakers over which job requests are broadcast. The Idaho State Employment Service had large placards distributed all over the region with the following inscription "Potato and Sugar Beet Workers -- Don't Travel to Look For Work ---- Until You Call At Your Nearest State Employment Office." The Employment Service activity is tending to replace pool hall recruitment.

The State Employment Service was most effective in placing migrants; the "locals" usually secured their own jobs. In the Upper Snake area the Mexicans and Negroes as a rule secured their own jobs through the sugar beet company or went directly to those growers for whom they had worked in past years.

LABOR CONTRACTORS

Mr. Louis Mort, labor contractor, who operated pea camps in Nampa, Wilder, and Donnelly, Idaho earlier in the season, and then operated an apple camp in the Mesa Orchards at Mesa, Idaho, offered his services to the Amalgamated Sugar Company at Nyssa, Oregon. He offered to provide beet toppers at \$20 per head. The company refused to have any dealings with Mr. Mort. He contacted individual farmers offering to supply beet toppers. He requested 10¢ to 15¢ a ton over the government scale as the fee for his services. The farmers declined his offer. Mr. Mort had a following of 50 to 90 workers, most of whom were from California.

LU SUB-COMMITTEES ON LABOR

There were nine County, Land Use Sub-Committees on Labor in the potato-sugar beet counties in Idaho. These committees were usually organized immediately before or during the harvest. They met once or twice and permitted the State Employment Service to do most of the work in mobilizing an adequate labor supply. More systematic activity may be expected from these Sub-Committees in the future.

ACCOMODATIONS

The family-size farm units that grow the bulk of the potatoes and sugar beets have little or no accomodations for their harvest hands. This is particularly true for families. The Upper Snake area which is off the main East-West Highway (U. S. No. 30) had more accomodations than the other areas. In all the areas the housing provided usually consisted of cheap bunk houses, box cars converted into bunk houses, or housing units improvised from chicken houses, barns, and

other outbuildings. Stoves were often furnished. Some of the districts (Aberdeen) do not have even rudimentary housing facilities. The only housing in a few of the districts consists of auto camps which are usually too costly for farm labor. In some of the districts the unattached men live in cheap hotels in towns. Sometimes they obtain board in town. Some of the farmers who use small crews board their labor. The usual charge for board on the farm and in town is \$1.00 per day. This price is prohibitive for family groups. The sugar beet companies have a few cabins near some of their plants. In Shelley the sugar beet company has a "sugar beet hotel". Negroes and Mexicans live in this "hotel". It has practically no furnishings, is in bad neglect, and infested with bed bugs. Some of the local Negroes from Idaho Falls provide board for these Negroes in the "hotel" for a dollar a day.

Only a few of the families had house trailers.

The only contrast to the drab and generally unsatisfactory housing conditions in the potato and sugar beet areas was found in the FSA camps.

There were two mobile units in the Upper Snake area; one mobile unit at Shelley which is the potato center, and one mobile unit at Blackfoot. The South Central area had a standard camp at Twin Falls and a mobile unit at Rupert. The Nampa-Jamieson area was served by a standard camp at Caldwell, Idaho and three mobile units. One unit was located at Nampa, Idaho, one at Wilder, Idaho, and one at Nyssa, Oregon.

At the peak of the harvest the two standard camps and six mobile units had a population of 2300.

The Shelley and Blackfoot camps in the Upper Snake area had practically no Negroes or Mexicans.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

The Amalgamated Sugar Company at Nyssa is working out a plan to provide housing for the beet workers on the beet growers' farms. Their plan consists of a \$250 three-year loan to the beet growers for a single-room, 9-bunk cabin. They are also thinking of putting a number of cabins at the loading stations which are scattered throughout the beet areas. These plans are in the blue-print stage but are being given very serious consideration. Several of the county LU Sub-Committees have taken up the question of suitable housing on the farms for harvest workers. There is talk of stimulating a campaign for building housing units on the farms for next year, particularly in view of the excellent returns the growers have received from the potato harvest. Some of the local Employment Service officials, particularly, are encouraging this campaign for some suitable housing for harvest workers on the farms.

WAGE RATES - UNIONS

There was a story in the Boise, Idaho papers in the spring of 1941 that the CIO was going to send organizers to Idaho to organize the harvest workers. However, there was no indication of activity on the part of the CIO. The CIO has practically no organization, if any, in the Snake River Valley, although the CIO Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union has some strength in the hard rock mines of North Idaho.

The A.F. of L. is relatively weak in the Snake River Valley. Most of its strength is concentrated in the Building Trades Unions. Pocatello, at the southern end of the Upper Snake area, is a stronghold of the A.F. of L. in Idaho. Idaho Falls, the center of the Upper Snake area, has a weak A.F. of L. organization.

An A.F. of L. organizer out of Pocatello succeeded in organizing the sugar beet plant of the U & I Company at Blackfoot. The organization then spread to the U & I plants at Shelley and Idaho Falls (Lincoln). The sugar beet workers are organized in the Beet Sugar Refinery Employees Local Union. Each plant has a local of the union. The plants are organized in federal unions on an industrial basis. The U & I plant at Toppenish, Washington is also organized. The main grievance of the U & I workers centered around the question of seniority. The workers claim that too many of the relatives of the sugar beet officials were getting the better jobs in the plants. Another grievance was the claim that wage reductions had resulted at the time of transfer from one plant to another. The workers made no demands for an increase in wage rates. The U & I Company at present has a base pay of $52\frac{1}{2}\phi$ an hour. In 1940 the base pay was 45¢. The unions have drawn up an agreement which they are planning to present to the company. The agreement on the whole is modeled on the one between the U & I Company and the Toppenish, Washington union. The only exception to this agreement is the provision that "the Company has the right to hire and fire." The Toppenish agreement stipulates that "the Company has the sole right to hire and fire."

The U & I Company has brought pressure in various ways on the workers to keep them out of the union. However, the workers joined the union despite this pressure. Some of the U & I officials were afraid that unionization of their plants would lead to demands on the part of the beet growers for higher prices for sugar beets.

The Amalgamated Sugar Company plant at Nyssa, Oregon was also organized during this year's campaign. The workers have an agreement with the company and were able to obtain a union shop and a 5¢ increase in the hourly wage rates. The Amalgamated Sugar Company plants at Burley, Paul, and Twin Falls are not as yet organized. Workers in these plants at Burley, Paul, and Twin Falls received wage increases however, which were apparently prompted by the union's success at Nyssa. The base pay in the Amalgamated plants is $57\frac{1}{2}\phi$ an hour.

About 1/2 of the workers in the sugar beet plants are farmers. Nearly all of the farmers and the foremen in the U & I plants joined the union.

Near the beginning of the potato-sugar beet harvest in the Shelley-Idaho Falls district the butchers and retail clerks in Idaho Falls organized and went on strike. They won their demands after a half day's strike and obtained a wage increase.

At about the same time as the union activity in the retail shops and sugar beet plants in the Upper Snake area took place, a number of the potato pickers in the Idaho Falls vicinity organized and called a mass meeting. The organized pickers consisted of both "locals" and migrants. A mass meeting with an attendance of over 200 was held in Hyland Park, Idaho Falls, on September 17, 1941. The organized pickers requested a rate of 8¢ per sack of potatoes in fields running less than 150 sacks per acre and 7¢ per sack in fields yielding more than 150 sacks per acre. They define a sack as an even 100 lbs., and stated that a board must be placed across the basket without resting on the potatoes (pickers pick in baskets equivalent to 1/2 sack of potatoes).

Increased living costs were an important factor in this flurry of union activity. The Department of Public Welfare of Idaho in the summer of 1941 reported that the cost of food in Idaho had risen over 20%.

On September 19, 1941, the Bonneville County Grange held a meeting to which they invited all of the growers in the Idaho Falls-Shelley districts to take up the demands of the organized potato pickers. The meeting went on record against the wage increases asked by the potato pickers. They decided that the rate would be 5¢ per sack with board and 6¢ per sack without board, regardless of the yield per acre. They defined a basket as "well rounded". A well rounded basket of potatoes weighs about 60 lbs. A picker's sack of potatoes weighs 120 lbs. A grower's sack of potatoes when he puts it on the market weighs 100 lbs.

A day after the growers' meeting in Idaho Falls, the "Idaho Falls Post Register" published a story in which they stated that the Manager of the Employment Service at Idaho Falls was filling all orders at 6¢ a sack. The Employment Service Manager was unsuccessful in his efforts to have this story retracted. There were practically no strikes or stoppages in the Upper Snake area. The potato pickers organization did not crystallize into a full-fledged union and apparently was not affiliated with any other trade union center. There was one strike of pickers in the Burley district on a large potato grower's field over wage rates. The pickers demanded 8¢ a sack. When their demand was refused the pickers walked off the field. The strike leader was fired and the other pickers returned to work.

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There was no attempt made to organize the sugar beet toppers.

At the beginning of the beet topping season some of the beet growers' associations decided to pay 5¢ and 10¢ bonuses over the government minimum scale. The beet growers' association gave no publicity to the decision, ^{and} in most districts no bonuses were paid at all. There was probably more bonus money paid in the Idaho Falls-Shelley district than in any other district. Some of the U & I officials, particularly in the Blackfoot district, went out of their way to prevent growers from paying a bonus. This situation was particularly true in those instances where the sugar company had some measure of financial control over the growers.

In at least one instance where the bonus was being paid a U & I field man advised the grower to stop paying the bonus. (Most of the toppers walked off the job).

The Mexicans that worked directly through the sugar company in the upper Snake area, however, did receive a 10¢ bonus. There were some instances where beet toppers received a flat rate of \$1.00 per ton regardless of yield per acre. Many of the beet toppers expressed the opinion that they should be getting \$1.00 a ton regardless of yield.

In November, 1940 a 10-lb. sack of sugar sold for 51¢ in Portland, Oregon. In November, 1941 a 10-lb. sack of sugar sold for 59¢ in Portland, Oregon.

There were strikes in the lettuce sheds near Wilder, Idaho and in the packing shed in Marsing, Idaho. Wage rates in the lettuce sheds as a result were increased 10¢ and upwards per hour.

There was a newspaper article in the syndicated column "At The National Capital" by John W. Kelley that appeared in various newspapers in Idaho on November 1, 1941. The article related that Dave Beck of Seattle, Washington, head of the teamsters' union in the Northwest and International Vice-President of the far West was backing a drive to organize the harvest workers in Idaho with its main emphasis on the sugar beet and potato harvest. The organization centers reported in the story were Twin Falls, Moscow, Lewiston, Boise, Blackfoot and Idaho Falls.

There was no evidence of any activity of the A.F. of L. in the organization of field workers in the Idaho harvest. However, on November 8, 1941, Mr. Beck announced that the teamsters of the eleven western states have joined a nation-wide boycott against Yakima apples and have stopped handling the Washington produce. This action is the outgrowth of a dispute between Yakima Valley packers and an affiliate of a teamsters' union Local No. 760 Fruit and Vegetable Pickers and Warehousemen's Union.

There was some complaint by Mr. Christiansen and Mr. Kelley, U & I officials, against "radicals and agitators" in the Shelley FSA camp. They withdrew their assertions when asked to substantiate these claims.

In the Nampa-Jamieson area some of the field men for the Amalgamated Sugar Company were disappointed with the results achieved by the Nyssa camp. They felt that the concentration of workers in one place tends to breed dissatisfaction among the workers. Workers who were blocking and thinning exceptionally weedy fields would hear about better fields from other campers and would therefore desert the weedier fields. It was the opinion of these field men that the FSA camps should be smaller so there would be smaller concentrations of workers. As a matter of fact, workers congregate in various places regardless of whether or not a camp is present. Too, workers usually find out where the less weedier fields are and have always done so, even before the camp program was in effect.

EARNINGS

The Labor Division of the Farm Security Administration has compiled reports on the employment and earnings of agricultural workers living in FSA camps throughout the Snake River Valley, as well as other areas. These reports have been supplemented by inquiries and observations made in the potato and sugar beet producing districts. Information from these sources is the basis for the following report upon earnings of harvest workers.

Potato pickers averaged earnings of \$13 per week during the month of September and \$22 per week during the peak month of October. The employment index for October was 75.1%, which indicates that the workers were employed 3/4 of their time during the harvest, considering 60 hours per week as a full week's work. Young adult male workers occasionally earned as much as \$6 and \$8 per day. The young single men earned on the average about \$5.50 per day. It should be remembered, however, that a large proportion of the potato workers were women and children and that many older family men were employed in the potato harvest. Judgments of earnings should be based upon a cross section of the entire group.

Sugar beet toppers earned an average of \$22 per week during the month of October. The beginning of the harvest was early in October and this is the peak month as well as the beginning month. The employment index was 85.4%. The beet toppers by custom work in crews and consequently the more efficient and the less efficient workers tend to become segregated into crews of like ability. During the 1941 season the potato picking rates were sufficiently attractive that most workers, except those who were most experienced and skilled at beet topping tended to pick potatoes.

The average earnings for 1940 in the potato and sugar beet harvest were considerably lower than in 1941. In 1940 weather conditions were very poor and the harvest operations were continually interrupted. Also, the rates for potato picking were lower. Average earnings in October, 1940 for potatoes were \$14.71 per week, and for beets \$14.55 per week.

According to all reports during both 1940 and 1941, the average earnings per worker in the potato and beet harvest have been higher than in any other Northwest crop employing large quantities of agricultural labor. The only exception is the machine-picked pea harvest in the Blue Mountain district.

Because of poor earnings in some crops and areas prior to the potato and sugar beet harvest, a number of families were completely impoverished at the beginning of work in these two crops. These families received food stamps and cash grants. This situation was particularly true for those families who had worked in the hand-picked pea harvest in the Teton Basin of Eastern Idaho.

Grant expenditures amounted to approximately \$3,000 in the Snake River Valley of Idaho and Oregon during the potato and sugar beet harvests. About 1/2 of this sum went for food. The other half went for clothing, (mostly school clothes) school supplies, and tuition.

LABOR SUPPLY AND PROGRESS OF HARVEST

The potato harvest started in the Upper Snake area in the middle of September. The peak of the harvest in this area ran from the last days in September until the 20th of October. The potato harvest in the South Central and Nampa-Jamieson areas started in the beginning of October and ran into November with the peak lasting until the end of October.

The sugar beet harvest in the Upper Snake area started September 29. In the South Central and Nampa-Jamieson areas the harvest started October 6, at about the same time as the potato harvest. The beet harvest in all areas was practically completed by November 15.

The bulk of the potatoes were picked by the 20th of October. A considerable percentage of the potato pickers did not go into the beet harvest. Children under 14 cannot work in the beet harvest because of government regulations. Children from 14 to 16 cannot work over eight hours per day because of the regulations. The family groups who were picking potatoes tended to go into other areas where the whole family could work. Many of the single potato pickers also refused to go into the beet harvest. The reason the single men and many of the family groups refused to go into the beet harvest, and instead went into the potato harvest, was because of the fact that there had been no increase in the beet topping rates outside of the rare occasion when a bonus was paid for beet topping. Their arguments ran as follows, "Potato picking rates have increased. The rates in the sugar beet plant have increased. The rates for general farm work have increased at least 10¢ an hour. The cost of living has gone up. Everything has gone up since 1940 but beet topping rates remain the same as in 1940 -- we'll keep on picking spuds." In general the situation of potato pickers refusing to top beets at the completion of the potato harvest was true in all areas. This condition was most marked in the Upper Snake area because of the fact that the potato harvest was earlier than the potato harvest in the South Central and Nampa-Jamieson areas. The pickers went into the later harvest areas^{even} though they were able to obtain only a limited number of days of additional potato picking. In the South Central and Nampa-Jamieson areas at the completion of the potato picking the worker must either go into the beet harvest or quit harvest work in the Northwest as there is practically no other harvest work to do.

Because of all the publicity given to the "labor shortage" before the harvest began, the growers were worried about the labor supply. Too, they were worried about the weather, for in 1940 the rainy weather greatly interfered with the progress of the potato-sugar beet harvest. According to the Weather Bureau, October, 1940 was the wettest October in Idaho on record. (However, the yield of potatoes per acre in 1940 was 118% of the 1930-39 period. The yield of sugar beets per acre in 1940 was 137% of the 1930-39 period.) An indication of the uneasiness of the growers may be seen in the report of one of the superintendents of the sugar beet factories that he had a job on his hands keeping up the morale of his field men and convincing them that there would be an adequate labor supply for the beet topping. At the beginning of the harvest in 1941, because of the worry over the "labor shortage" and weather difficulties, the growers had a tendency to rush the completion of the harvest while good weather lasted. As a result, the demand for labor in the first weeks of the harvest was very high. The Employment Service was unable to fill these extraordinary demands for labor at the beginning of the harvest. As a rule the Employment Service worked on a 60% basis in filling orders. If a grower asked for ten toppers the Employment Service would send him six toppers.

The potato-sugar beet harvest proceeded smoothly and according to schedule. The weather was excellent in most districts.

In most areas there were reports of less workers than in past years. The Aberdeen district which had a large percentage of migrants in former years had practically no migrants at all in 1941. However, despite the smaller number of workers this year the Aberdeen district was a little bit ahead of its usual schedule. In the Rupert-Paul district the farmers reported that they had more migrant labor this year than in past years. They attributed this added labor supply to the FSA camp in Rupert, Idaho.

In practically all the districts local officials were surprised to discover that there was an adequate labor supply.

The wage scales were probably the most important factor determining the labor supply in the potato-sugar beet harvest.

In previous years when the potato picking rate was 4¢ and 5¢ per sack the workers preferred sugar beet work. In 1941 with the higher rate for potato picking and the status quo rate for beet topping the workers preferred potato picking.

The labor supply for the potato-sugar beet harvest undoubtedly was adequate.

The Amalgamated Sugar Company attempted to recruit additional beet toppers from California. They failed by their own efforts and requested the Idaho State Employment Service to arrange clearance with the California Employment Service for additional beet toppers in the Twin Falls district. 67 beet toppers arrived from California in the South Central area. The manager of the Twin Falls Employment Service office was of the opinion that the crop would have been harvested without these 67 additional toppers.

These 67 additional workers had the effect of quieting the beet toppers in their talk for higher topping rates. The appearance of these additional toppers demonstrated to the available toppers that more toppers could be supplied at the status quo rate if any of them were inclined to get too independent and ask for higher rates.

The Amalgamated Sugar Company also requested the Employment Service to import additional toppers for the Burley district. However, the County Sub-Committees on Labor advised against fulfillment of the request as they felt that sufficient toppers were available.

LABOR SUPPLY DEVELOPMENTS

In spite of the fact that there was an adequate labor supply for the beet harvest and for the spring work in beets in 1941 some of the sugar company officials are thinking and talking about opening up the borders -- Mexican and Canadian -- in order to obtain a larger labor supply.

They are also thinking and talking of lifting the child labor regulations in beet work.

The company officials are not concerned so much about the harvest labor supply as they are the labor supply for the thinning, blocking, and weeding work in the spring.

There is some speculation about the effect of defense employment on the 1942 farm work and harvest. It is possible that the Henry's Lake defense construction work, near West Yellowstone, Montana, will attract an oversupply of unskilled workers, who will be available for farm work. Also, some west bound migrants, to coast defense work centers, may plan to stop in Idaho for farm and harvest work en route. On the other hand, defense employment may compete with farm and harvest work.

YIELD AND PRODUCTION

In 1941 the indicated yield as of November 1, 1941 for Idaho potatoes according to the Agricultural Marketing Service, was 153 sacks per acre. This yield, while six sacks lower than 1940 yield, was 18 sacks higher than the yield for the 1930-39 period. The indicated production will be over 28,000,000 bushels of potatoes, - some 7,000,000 bushels less than in 1940 and 3,000,000 bushels less than the average in 1930-39 period. The harvested acreage for 1941 was 112,000 acres, 12,000 acres less than 1940 and 2,000 acres less than in 1930-39 period.

The price for potatoes and returns to the growers have varied greatly from year to year. In recent years this large variation of price and returns may be seen in the figures for 1936 and 1937. In 1936 potatoes sold for \$1.53 a sack with an average value of \$193 per acre for a crop value over \$20,000,000. In 1937 potatoes sold for 43¢ a sack with an average value of \$64 per acre for a crop value under \$8,000,000. There were 18,000 more acres in 1937 than there were in 1936.

The Agricultural Adjustment Administration program has had a very small effect on the acreage of potatoes in Idaho. The important factor in determining the acreage is the price received by the grower in the previous year.

In 1940 No. 1 Russets were as low as 35¢ per 100-pound sack and went up to 60¢ and 65¢. In 1941 No. 1 Russets started at 50¢ per 100-pound sack, rapidly went to \$1.00 per sack and at present (November 17) are selling at \$1.35 per 100-pound sack. Most of the growers are holding their potatoes, refusing to sell on this rising market. There are possibilities that some of the growers will receive \$2 a sack for No. 1's this year. They are receiving 65¢ to 70¢ a sack at present for No. 2 Russets. Last year No. 2's were selling for 15¢.

Mr. Hersley, an official of the potato growers' association stated, "Farmers relize a fairly good price at \$1 per cwt. Generally, this price means prosperity for the potato farmers." At the present potato prices, growers will receive a good margin above costs.

There are indications that had the potato growers known that the price would reach its present level, they would have met the demands of the pickers' organization for 7¢ and 8¢ a sack.

The two starch factories at Blackfoot and Twin Falls are new potato developments in Idaho. These factories will serve as an outlet for considerable tonnage of cull potatoes.

The potato growers were assisted by a potato diversion for feed program and a considerable tonnage was also diverted into the Surplus Commodities Corporation.

The Food For Freedom quotas for potatoes call for a 10% acreage increase for 1942. This increase would bring the acreage up to the figures for 1934, 1937, 1939 and 1940, 124,000 acres.

According to BAE (Breen-Waugh) reports, potato growers received about 60¢ of the consumer's potato dollar during 1913-1919 period. During the 1920 s growers received an average of 54¢ of the consumer's potato dollar. During the 1930-36 period the growers received an average of under 50¢ of the consumer's dollar

SUGAR BEETS

There was a considerable reduction in the sugar beet quotas for 1941. The 1940 acreage was over 70,000 acres, and 1941 acreage was about 60,000 acres. However, the 1941 sugar beet acreage was larger than the average for the 1930 to 1939 period.

The indicated average yield as of November 1, 1941, was 14 tons per acre. The yield was 2.1 tons per acre less than the 1940 yield and 3.3 tons per acre larger than the yield for the 1930 to 1939 period. The indicated production of sugar beets as of November 1, 1941, is 826,000 tons. This 1941 production is considerably smaller than the record yield for 1940 of over 1,100,000 tons. However, the 1941 tonnage was 175,000 tons larger than the 1930 to 1939 tonnage. The smaller 1941 yield is compensated for by an increase in the sugar content of the beets. The growers are paid according to the sugar content of the beets. This year the growers will probably receive about \$7 per ton for

sugar beets. There are some estimates that they will receive more than \$7.50 per ton. Gross returns will be in the neighborhood of \$98 per acre.

Payment of a 10¢ bonus would have decreased the net returns to the growers to the extent of \$1.40 per acre.

In the past years the returns to the sugar beet growers have been fairly stable. The sugar beet market has not experienced the ups and downs of the potato market. In 1940 the growers received about \$6.40 a ton.

The Amalgamated Sugar Company is building a new plant outside of Nampa, Idaho. The plant will be ready for the 1942 sugar beet season. The Amalgamated plant at Ogden, Utah will be dismantled and moved to Nampa, Idaho. 15,000 acres are planned for the Nampa plant. There will be no quota restrictions on sugar beet acreage for 1942. The field men, however, are worried about obtaining an acreage as large as the 1941 acreage in 1942. They are mostly concerned over obtaining an adequate labor supply for the spring work in beets. (Average weekly earnings under \$14 for the difficult, tedious job of blocking and thinning beets in the spring, will help explain the difficulties in obtaining an adequate labor supply for spring work.)

According to the BAE reports the beet growers in 1937 received 36¢ of the consumer's sugar dollar.

The beet growers received \$1.80 a ton under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration program. Under this Agricultural Adjustment Administration program the beet growers in Idaho will receive payments totalling about one and one-half million dollars in 1941.

MECHANIZATION

POTATOES

For years there have been developments of various potato picking machines.

Over the course of years the mechanical potato pickers became a definite success in only one district. Some ten years ago about 500 machines were brought into the St. Anthony district in the Upper Snake area. These machines were mostly utilized on the sandy soil on the bench land west of the Snake River. The complete acreage of the bench land, about 5,000 acres, has since been harvested by the potato combines. The Tusco Company that manufactured the machines is out of existence. The local blacksmiths have kept these combines in good repair in the course of the last ten years. The farmers report that with the many improvements on the combines they are more effective in picking potatoes than they were ten years ago. At present there are about 400 combines operating in this district. The growers using the combines are able to get their potatoes into the cellar at half the cost to the growers that use hand pickers.

The fear of a labor shortage in 1941 stimulated interest in the combines. Local blacksmiths and farmers have built about 20 machines in the Upper Snake area. The blacksmith at Blackfoot has built a machine for \$100.

sugar beets. There are some estimates that they will receive more than \$1.00 per ton. Gross returns will be in the neighborhood of \$2.00 per ton.

Payment of a 10% bonus would have decreased the net returns to the growers to the extent of \$1.40 per acre.

In the past years the returns to the sugar beet growers have been fairly stable. The sugar beet market has not experienced the ups and downs of the potato market. In 1940 the growers received about \$2.40 a ton.

The Associated Sugar Company is building a new plant outside of Idaho. The plant will be ready for the 1942 sugar beet season. The Associated plant at Orem, Utah will be dismantled and moved to Idaho. 15,000 acres are planned for the Idaho plant. There will be no great restrictions on sugar beet acreage for 1942. The third year, however, are worried about obtaining an acreage as large as the 1941 acreage in 1942. They are mostly concerned over obtaining an adequate labor supply for the spring work in beets. (Average weekly earnings under \$14 for the difficult, tedious job of blocking and thinning beets in the spring, will help explain the difficulties in obtaining an adequate labor supply for spring work.)

According to the BAS reports the beet growers in 1937 received 30¢ of the consumer's sugar dollar.

The beet growers received \$1.80 a ton under the Agricultural Adjustment program the beet growers in Idaho will receive payments totaling about one and one-half million dollars in 1941.

POTATOES

For years there have been developments of various potato picking machines.

Over the course of years the mechanical potato pickers became a definite success in only one district. Some ten years ago about 500 machines were brought into the St. Anthony district in the Upper Snake area. These machines were mostly utilized on the sandy soil on the bench land west of the Snake River. The complete acreage of the bench land, about 2,000 acres, has since been covered by the potato combines. The Rusco Company that manufactured the machines is out of existence. The last ten years. The farmers report that with the many improvements made on the combines they are more effective in picking potatoes than they were ten years ago. At present there are about 400 combines operating in this district. The growers using the combines are able to pick potatoes at a rate of about 100 bushels per hour.

The first mechanical potato picker was built in 1941 and it was a disappointment. The blacksmith at Blackfoot has built a machine for \$100. The machine has built about 20 machines in the lower Snake River area.

The blacksmith at Aberdeen built a machine for \$125. These machines were successful on light sandy soil.

The machines require one man at the bagger (2 baggers in very high yielding fields) and require one or two persons on the machine picking out clods and vines. Usually, women, children and older men are employed picking vines and smashing clods on the combines. The crew of three persons on the combine would be the equivalent of six to nine hand pickers. The labor force required for the mechanical picker is therefore $1/2$ to $2/3$ less than that for hand picking. The savings made in mechanical picking paid for the cost of the combine in several days.

There were only one or two machines in the South Central area. The dealer who had handled machines ten years ago at St. Anthony reports that he has received many inquiries regarding the potato combines from the South Central area of the State. The local blacksmiths and implement dealers throughout the Upper Snake area also report much interest in the combines.

There^{are}/considerable acreages of light sandy soil in other areas of the State in which the present type of combine would undoubtedly be successful.

Some of the blacksmiths are of the opinion that the combine could even be successful in heavy cloddy soil if the machines were lengthened so that four persons could be utilized picking clods, rocks, and vines. If such were the case, even with the two additional persons the combines would be economical. The blacksmith at Aberdeen has invented a potato piler machine which farmers report is very successful. It is about $1/3$ as costly as the former methods of piling potatoes.

SUGAR BEETS

As in the case of potato picking machines there have been many attempts to perfect an economic beet topping machine.

The various sugar beet companies have pooled their efforts in conjunction with the Extension Service of the University of California in developing a suitable beet topper. They have a machine which they are at present experimenting with in Fort Collins, Colorado. There are reports that this machine is a rather cumbersome costly affair and far from successful.

Two of the local mechanics in the Snake River area have invented beet toppers. Mr. Ed Braden of Burley has invented two machines. Mr. Harry Shuler of Ontario, Oregon has also invented a beet topper. These beet toppers are fairly simple. The machines were used on an experimental basis in the South Central and Nampa-Jamieson areas. Two of Mr. Braden's machines are two-row tractor toppers. The other machine is a one-row horse drawn topper. These local mechanical toppers top the beets better than the hand toppers. In an experiment at Twin Falls 16 rows were topped by the machine and 16 adjacent rows were topped by hand. The tare (tonnage discount) for the mechanical topping was 3.2%. The tare for hand topping was 5.2%. The mechanical topper had a 2% advantage over the hand toppers.

The main difficulty of these mechanical toppers is the failure of the machines to sufficiently elevate the beets out of the dirt. Mr. Braden claims that he has solved the problem of elevating the beets but wasn't able this year to get the equipment for the attachments.

Some of the sugar company officials are of the opinion that the local inventions are more effective and have more promise than the machine developed at the University of California.

The Sawtooth Company (Moline dealer) of Boise, Idaho feel that they will be able to have Mr. Braden's machine on the market for the 1942 season with an effective beet elevator.

Mr. Braden also claims to have invented a machine that will eliminate about 75% of the labor entailed in the blocking, thinning and weeding of beets. The machine consists of a device to split the seed so that only one plant will germinate. The Sawtooth Company has acquired some land in Sunnyslope near Caldwell, Idaho where they will experiment with this seed splitting machine. Some of the sugar company officials are of the opinion that cross cultivation methods in the spring work on the beets will eliminate a substantial percentage of the labor required for cultivating the beets. They state that in all probability the yield per acre will be less than with hand work. However, the savings in labor costs will more than compensate for the smaller yield.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The potato and sugar beets were completely harvested in substantially the same time as in former years.
2. There was an adequate labor supply for the harvests.
3. The labor supply in 1941 for the various districts was directly dependent upon
 - (a) wage rates paid and
 - (b) housing accommodations available.
4. It is necessary to stabilize potato prices at a level enabling growers to both obtain fair returns and pay fair rates to farm labor.
5. In order to adequately house the harvest labor it will be necessary to supplement the present housing facilities afforded by the FSA camp program with neighborhood and on-the-farm housing facilities throughout the widespread potato-sugar beet acreage. Additional mobile camps may also be needed.
6. Mechanization may ease any threatened labor shortage in coming years, although machinery is not yet fully perfected. The type of machinery required can be produced locally without heavy demands for materials and plant facilities.

of these mechanical farmers in the future of the
industry is to get the bees out of the field. The
problem has been solved the problem of elevating the bees and
this year to get the equipment for the equipment.

Some of the sugar company officials are of the opinion that the local
growers are more efficient and have more progress than the machine
growers at the University of California.

The Southwest Company (Molina Brothers) of Boise, Idaho feel that they
will be able to have Mr. Smith's machine on the market for the 1935
season with an effective best elevator.

Mr. Smith of the company to have invented a machine that will eliminate
about 75% of the labor involved in the plowing, turning and weeding
of a field. The machine consists of a device to lift the soil as the
only one thing will be eliminated. The Southwest Company has acquired some
land in Sunnyside near Caldwell, Idaho where they will experiment with
the seed sowing machine. Some of the sugar company officials are
of the opinion that cross cultivation is the best in the spring work on
the field will eliminate a great deal of the labor required
for cultivating the field. They state that in all circumstances the
field per acre will be less than when hand work is done, however, the savings
in labor costs will more than compensate for the initial cost.

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the same time as in former years.

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(a) wage rates paid

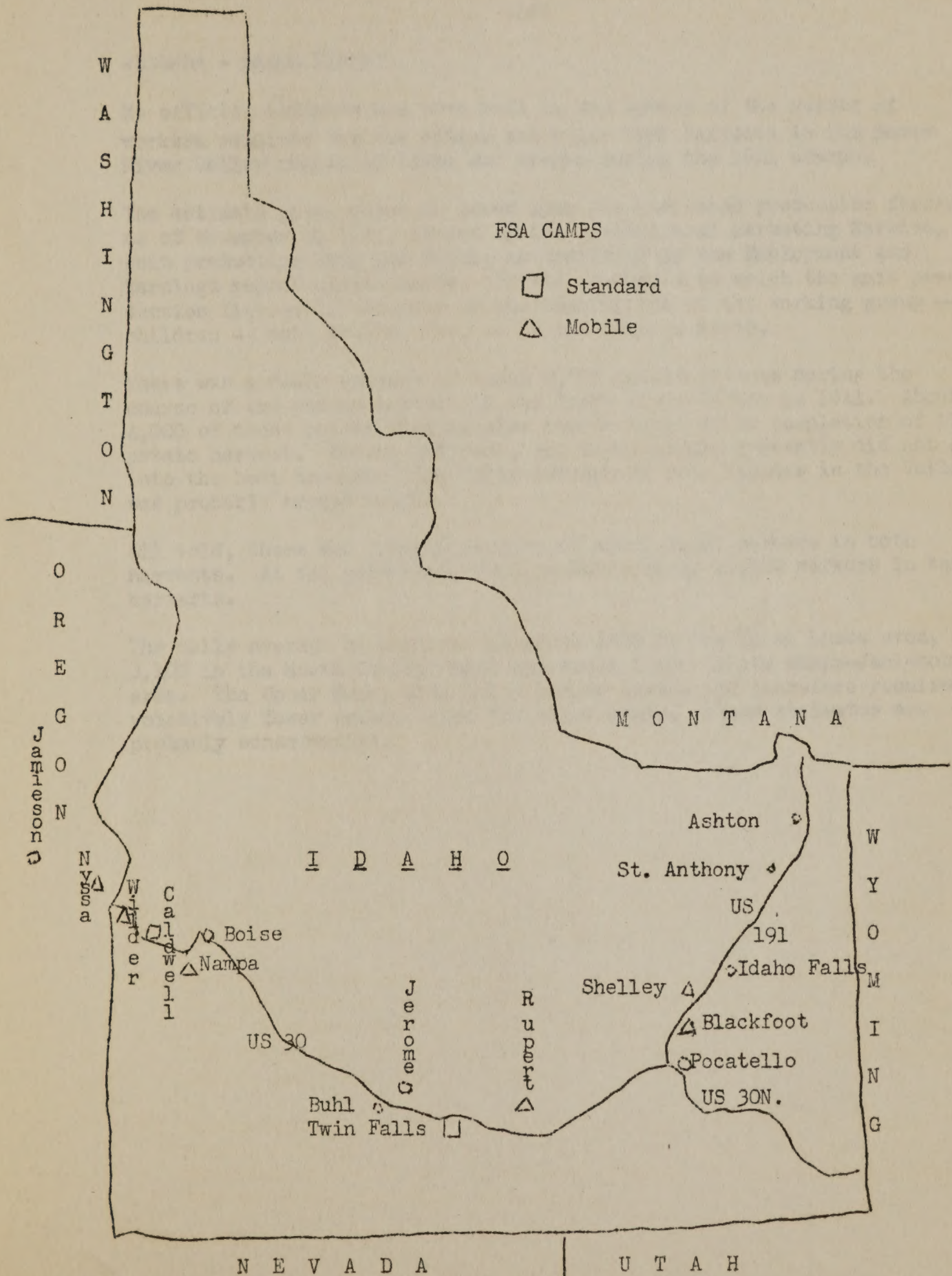
(b) housing accommodations available.

4. It is necessary to establish prices at a level enabling growers
to obtain fair returns and pay fair rates to farm labor.

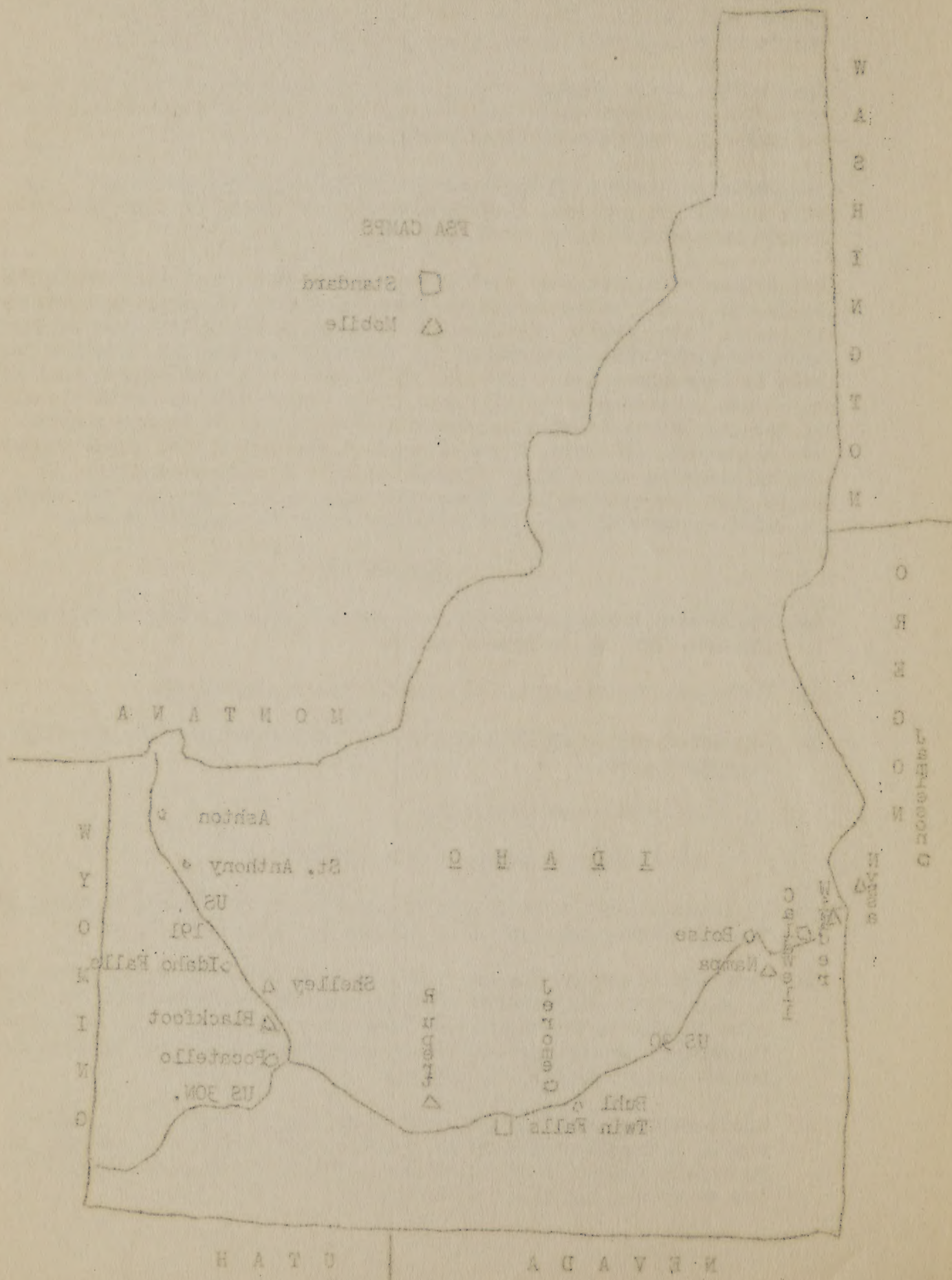
5. In order to adequately house the harvest labor it will be necessary
to supplement the present housing facilities as provided by the
camp program with neighborhood and on-the-job housing facilities.
The camps may also be needed.

It is suggested that any farmer labor shortage in coming
years, if the machine is used, will be reduced. The type of
equipment can be produced locally without heavy demands
on plant facilities.

7. Unionization of harvest and farm workers was not an important factor in the 1941 labor picture, but attitudes of workers are changing, compared with past years, and some systematic organization of workers is in prospect for 1942.



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ADDENDA - LABOR SUPPLY

No official estimate has been made by any agency of the number of workers required for the potato and sugar beet harvests in the Snake River Valley region of Idaho and Oregon during the 1941 season.

The estimate given below is based upon the indicated production figures as of November 1, 1941, issued by the Agricultural Marketing Service, and unit production data per worker as indicated by the Employment and Earnings report quoted above. It was necessary to weigh the unit production figures in relation to the composition of the working group -- children -- male adults, etc. -- in the various areas.

There was a daily average of about 6,000 potato pickers during the course of the potato harvest in the Snake River Valley in 1941. About 4,000 of these potato pickers also topped beets after completion of the potato harvest. Women, children, and older people generally did not go into the beet harvest. The daily average of beet toppers in the Valley was probably around 6,500.

All told, there was a daily average of about 8,500 workers in both harvests. At the peak there were probably about 10,000 workers in the harvests.

The daily average of workers was about 3800 in the Upper Snake area, about 3,100 in the South Central area and about 1,600 in the Nampa-Jamieson area. The Upper Snake area had a longer season and therefore required relatively fewer workers than the other areas. These estimates are probably conservative.

APPENDIX - LABOR SUPPLY

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All told, there was a fairly average of about 8,500 workers in both harvests. At the peak there were probably about 10,000 workers in the harvests.

The daily average of workers was about 3,800 in the Upper Snake area, about 3,100 in the South Central area and about 1,600 in the Nampa-Lewiston area. The Upper Snake area had a longer season and therefore required relatively fewer workers than the other areas. These estimates are probably conservative.